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TAGS: KDEM PREL BO FR  
SUBJECT: FRANCE AGREES WITH FOCUSING INTERNATIONAL MEDIA  
ATTENTION ON BELARUS ELECTION

REF: STATE 8180

Classified By: POLITICAL MINISTER COUNSELOR JOSIAH ROSENBLATT,  
FOR REASONS 1.4 B/D

¶1. (C) On January 27, Poloff met with Antoine Gosset, the MFA's desk officer for Belarus, to discuss reftel demarche encouraging international media attention on the March 19 Belarus presidential election. Gosset said the MFA agreed with the demarche points and furthermore, the MFA would be ramping up its public diplomacy efforts to focus the attention of the French press on the election. This had been one of the reasons for inviting opposition candidate Alexander Milinkevich to Paris in early January.

¶2. (C) Gosset added that Euronews, a satellite television station based out of Lyon, is included in several Russian-language cable packages available in Belarus. MFA officials had spoken with Euronews in October 2005, said Gosset, and made them aware of the importance of their station in informing Belarus elites. Euronews directors were open to continuing the dialogue, said Gosset, and had recently featured over a period of days an interview with Belarus opposition leader Milinkevich during his recent visit to Paris. The MFA had learned, said Gosset, that the Belarus-based father of the reporter interviewing Milinkevich had subsequently been "visited" and warned by the Belarus FSB. Gosset believed that Euronews would not shy away from reporting on the Belarus elections and international reactions to them. He noted that Euronews, despite being based in France, has a clear European focus, and would more likely be interested in Belarus-related news coming from the EU rather than from France.

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